Horwood, L.J., Fergusson, D.M., Shannon, F.T. "Social and Familial Factors in the Development of Early Childhood Asthma" Pediatrics 75: 859-868, 1985.

ABSTRACT. The role of social and familial factors in the development of childhood asthma by age 6 years was studied in a birth cohort of New Zealand children. Rates of asthma varied markedly with the child's sex; boys had twice the rate of asthma as girls. In addition, the factors associated with asthma varied with the child's sex. For boys, wheeze during infancy, early eczema, and parental asthma were all significant risk factors; for girls, the only risk factor was early eczema. Proportional hazards modeling of the data failed to show any significant associations between the development of asthma and a large range of other social and familial factors including breast-feeding, parental smoking habits, pets in the child's family, stress in the family, or family social background. It was concluded that asthma in early childhood appeared to be inherited to some extent, its age of expression was related to the child's sex, and it had a complex interaction with other forms of allergic disease. There was no evidence to suggest that the structure, practices, or dynamics of the child's family played a significant role in the development of asthma for children in this birth cohort.

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